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ABSTRACT

Between 1795 and 1993, elementary and secondary schooling in New York State shifted from a private/local to a public/state activity. That shift from local to state control and identity involved a lengthy political struggle and reveals the historical working-out of two conflicting themes in the American political tradition: popular democratic control versus administrative efficiency and filtered representation. Since 1900 the total number of school districts nationwide has decreased from 150,000 to less than 16,000. In New York, the decrease is from 11,000 to 720. Proponents of consolidation, typically lead by well-educated professionals with positions of authority, have used arguments of increased equity, efficiency, and quality. Citizens who resist consolidation, often considered to be penurious or ignorant, have expressed concerns about democratic participation, local control, and the nature and function of education. The accomplishments of consolidation and centralization include the provision of a somewhat equitably financed system of schools providing a comprehensive education program and co-curricular activities delivered by credentialed experts in modern school buildings. However, consolidation has also led to the loss of opportunities for civic education and to the dissolution of rural communities. (KS)

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RURAL SCHOOL CONSOLIDATION IN NEW YORK STATE, 1795-1993: A STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL

by

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Cultural Foundations of Education in the Graduate School of Syracuse University
August 1994

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ABSTRACT

RURAL SCHOOL CONSOLIDATION IN NEW YORK STATE, 1795-1993:

A STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL

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1994

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Between 1795 and 1993 elementary and secondary schooling in New York State shifted from a private-local to a public-State activity. In 1795 schools were not tax supported; no level of government had oversight or regulatory authority; there were no licensure requirements for staff, buildings, or programs; and neither attendance at nor provision of formal education was mandatory. By 1993 elementary and secondary schooling was mandatory both in provision and use, and schooling had been organized into a standardized, centralized, and consolidated system of tax supported schools operated under the direct regulation and oversight of the State. The change was evolutionary in nature and cannot be attributed to a single act or period of time.

That shift from local to State control and identity involved a lengthy political struggle and reveals the historical working out of two conflicting themes in the American political tradition: (1) Popular democratic control, represented by the political theories espoused by Thomas Jefferson, and (2)

Administrative efficiency and filtered representation, represented by the writings of Alexander Hamilton.

Jefferson's profound insight was that citizens gain civic education and competence through apprenticeship in public office. In this sense, local control serves an important function of civic education.

State-directed consolidation and centralization brought some beneficial reforms. It also effectively eliminated the civic education function of the local school for adult residents and produced secondary effects such as the loss of community identity and involvement in education. Current State reform efforts contradict themselves by continuing past attacks on local control while simultaneously trying to foster the sort of civic education and community involvement that increased State control had eliminated.

Since 1900 the total number of school district nationwide has decreased from 150,000 to less than 16,000; a loss of 90%. In New York the decrease is from 11,000 to 720; a loss of 93%. Those losses represent dramatic shifts in school governance and school-community relations. They also support the claim that American voters today are perhaps less apathetic than they are disenfranchised, or at least disconnected from any meaningful role in a society where deference is paid to technical expertise and public institutions are increasingly run by centralized professional bureaucracies.

INTRODUCTION

We tend to view the present as the natural and logical, even inevitable, result of past events. But history is full of alternatives; paths glimpsed, perhaps even peeked down, but never walked. By documenting the tension between local and State control of schools in the creation of New York's education system and the consolidation of its school districts I provide the basis for wondering afresh about new possibilities, for seeing the present not as inevitable, but as one answer to questions still being asked.

The Setting

Rural schools are a forgotten bit of the American education system. In many ways, rural America is a forgotten part of this country. Or maybe it is not so much forgotten as ineffable, hard to grasp. Geographically, rural America is enormous, covering 97.5% of the land area of the United States. But the population inhabiting that huge area is so diverse as to defy categorization.[1] Jonathan Sher makes this point of rural heterogeneity by asking:

> What do an island village off the coast of Maine, a coal mining town in West Virginia, a ranching area in Wyoming, a college town in Minnesota, an impoverished community in the Mississippi delta region, a ski resort section in Vermont, a migrant worker settlement in Texas, an Alaska native village... and a prosperous grain-farming area in Iowa have in common? Not much, except that they are classified as RURAL areas of the United States.[2]

The following table illustrates the scope of ruralness in America. The categories are conservative. For instance, many if not most of the areas classified as "Small Town" could be considered rural. If we include this category with the category "Rural" then the number of rural schools jumps to 51% of the national total and the number of rural students jumps to 15.2 million, or 38% of the total. The point, however, is not to pin down precise numbers but rather to realize that decisions that effect so many people, and shape the education of such a sizeable number of our youth, require careful consideration. A crucial first step is to understand the historical basis of and traditional tensions in current policy.

Rural America represents, arguably, the greatest range of cultural, political, and social diversity in this country. The designation "rural" is almost always based on population density and is otherwise arbitrary. There are, however, two other things that the above communities have in common, besides being classified rural. Their schools are generally known in education circles as comprising "the rural school problem," and the ubiquitous solution to the problem of rural schools is school and district consolidation.

TABLE 1

Public Schools in the United States: (1989 Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) Statistical Report using 1987-1988 data)

Category	Number of Schools	Enrollment
Rural	22,319 (28%)	6,510,000 (16%)
Small Town	18,659 (23%)	8,736,000 (22%)
Large Town	1,828 (2%)	968,000 (2%)
Mid-City Urban Fringe	7,701 (12%)	4,747,000 (12%)
Large-City Urb. Frng.	10,696 (13%)	6,631,000 (17%)
Mid-City Urban	11,092 (14%)	6,642,000 (17%)
Large City	6,997 (9%)	5,208,000 (13%)
Totals:	79,292 (101%)	39,442,000 (99%)

Rural: Those living on farms, in unincorporated political units, and in towns with a population < 2,500.
Small Town: Not in Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA), population 2,500-25,000.
Large Town: Not in SMSA, population 25,000+.

1990 United States Census Data:

Total Population of the United States:
Urban 75.2%

Rural 24.8%

Definitions:
Urban: ≥ 2,500 population in incorporated territory, with some exceptions noted.

Rural: < 2,500 population, or living in unincorporated territory, or those living on farms.

Land Area:
Urban: 2.5%

Rural: 97.5%

For over one hundred years school consolidation has been the panacea for whatever ails, or is thought to ail, rural schools. However much we may think of curselves in cosmopolitan terms, rural American is not a quaint part of our past: almost a quarter of the American population still live in rural areas; more than 6.5 million children currently attend rural schools.[3] Although few rural children still walk or ride livestock to get to the local one-room schoolhouse, millions wait on back roads for school busses to carry them to the nearest centralized, graded school. These central schools are the new target for elimination. Contemporary reform movements to improve rural education or cut costs still focus on consolidation as the solution. As of this writing, at least nine states (Arkansas, Georgia, Iowa, Massachusetts, New York, Oklahoma, North Carolina, Utah, and Vermont) have re-initiated efforts to consolidate rural schools.

In the past 93 years the total number of school districts nationwide has decreased from 150,000 to less than 16,000; a loss of more than 90%.[4] In New York the decrease is from 11,000 to 720; a loss of 93%.[5] The decrease is largely accounted for by the consolidation of rural districts. Those consolidations involve dramatic shifts in school governance and school-community relations, the virtual elimination of the common school district, and the creation of graded elementary and large centralized high schools with diversified curricula and specialized professional faculty.

If every district had 3 elected school board members or

trustees, a conservative estimate, then in a period when the school age population more than doubled, the number of locally elected school officials was reduced by 93%, from 33,000 to 2,160, in New York State. Such figures support the work of scholars who argue that American voters are perhaps less apathetic than they are disenfranchised, or at least disconnected from any meaningful role of governance in a society where deference is paid to technical expertise and public institutions are increasingly run by centralized professional bureaucracies.[6]

As public policy, arguments for school consolidation seek justification in foundational arguments for the State's compelling interest in ensuring equity, efficiency, and quality.

The equity argument compares the educational opportunity for rural youth unfavorably to that of urban or suburban youth. Rural schools do not match the programs, physical plant facilities, and dollars spent of their metropolitan counterparts.

The efficiency argument relies on the face validity of economies of scale and division of labor. The assumption is that aggregating existing resources and children under a strict division of labor will produce:

1) more diversified and comprehensive curricula,
2) state-of-the-art facilities,
3) superior professional staff,
4) more effective administration, and
5) lower per pupil costs.

The quality argument assumes that a suburban-industrial educational model realized through a cost-efficient educational structure, per above, will yield superior education for rural youth.

There are logical and empirical reasons to challenge these assumptions. Material and programmatic equality are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for excellent education. Consolidating schools involves dis-economies as well as economies of scale and an increase in State aid which make generalizations about financial savings ambiguous if not untenable. Comprehensiveness of program has an unclear relation to school size. Student participation, loyalty, and discipline seem inversely related to size. Most important, there is no clear evidence that rural children as a class are educationally disadvantaged, and thus require the "benefits" of consolidation.[7]

Claims of equity, efficiency, and quality should be researched. However, an undue emphasis on this trio of concerns obscures more fundamental and important questions about the role and function of rural public schools in a democratic polity. This dissertation is an attempt to recast the issue of school consolidation from a technical discussion of how best to do it, to a considered debate about what is gained and lost through consolidation and its purpose in the context of rural schooling. In particular, I am interested in tracing the tension between local autonomy and State control and what that implies about our conceptions of both democracy and the development of democratic citizens. I proceed by way of a historical examination of the

development and evolution of the educational system of New York State, specifically as it concerns rural schools.

The Argument

This dissertation traces the establishment and evolution of a system of public schooling for rural children in New York State. I focus on those institutions that we now think of as elementary and secondary schools. The elementary and secondary schools of today are not, however, merely modern versions of the common schools, high schools, academies, literary institutes, seminaries, academic departments, and just plain schools of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and even early twentieth centuries. The modern differ from the old in terms of purpose, curriculum, and relationship to both the community and the State. The story that unfolds in the following pages provides, in its most general sense, an account of the transformation of these schools. The story of that transformation includes a tale of how schools which were created, controlled, and funded locally forged links with the State of New York until the local nature of the schools was subsumed under the prevalence of State control. This dissertation is the story of the transformation in the relationship between these local schools, their communities, and the State.

The argument is simple. The main points can be outlined as follows:

1) Schools were created locally by neighbors and/or

congregations. Created, controlled, and funded locally, rural schools slowly forged utilitarian links with the State of New York. At no time, however, before the late 1800s were the schools generally thought of as anything other than specifically and properly local in nature, governance, and service.

2) The State gained control over schools slowly, partly through regulation, but more effectively through financial assistance. Most money has strings attached. In the case of New York's schools those strings have bound the schools sufficiently tightly to the State that it is now hard to conceive of schools as anything but creatures of the State.

3) As an expanded sense of the State's compelling interest in education gained popular political support, pressure for increased financial aid and direct effect on practice also increased. The political and professional bases for the claims of compelling State interest produced derivative interests which led to a stream-lining of systems of administration and accountability. The emergence in the late nineteenth century of metaphors of scientific management, industrial efficiency, and progressive education supported tendencies toward centralized administrative, fiscal, and curricula control. These metaphors also established the rhetorical parameters of debates about education. As a result, school and district

centralization and educational standardization is assumed to be positive. Alternative arguments cannot even be heard as legitimate voices in the debate, and those that voice them are dismissed as ignorant or penuriously self-interested.

4) The elimination of the local school and district was protested, often vehemently. That protest was grounded in both positive and negative arguments. Positive arguments included those for local control, for the democratic function of small schools run locally, for the educational benefit of small, local communities, and for considerations of moral education. Negative arguments stressed suspicions of higher taxes, wariness of professional educators and State officials, and concerns for the physical and moral health and safety of children being transported to and housed in larger, more distant schools with larger student populations.

5) Many members of a school community retain a sense of ownership and a legacy of local control and distrust of the State that makes it difficult for them to refer to and think of the local school as anything but "our school."

6) The State's tendency toward top-down organizational centralization and structural consolidation not only runs contrary to and undermines current reform efforts geared

toward decentralization, but has little grounding in research, dilutes democratic control in favor of professional administration, and exacerbates local opposition to consolidation.

My goal is limited and twofold: to provide a historical context for discussing rural school consolidation, particularly within New York State; and to record and explicate the implicit and explicit concerns embodied in the various arguments advanced either in favor of or against consolidation, while tracing the evolution of those arguments.

The debate over school consolidation vibrates with a long history of delicately balanced tensions. It is tempting to reduce these tensions to simple polarities such as local versus State control or comprehensive education versus the basics. These reductions have heuristic and explanatory value. On the other hand, we are left with only partial truths if we stress simplistic and polar categorizations to the exclusion of a richer understanding of the debate. Nor are the tensions strictly between those who fit neatly into opposing camps. Rather, I wish to suggest a web of virtues, beliefs, strategies, assumptions, and traditions that come into conflict both between and within individuals in the pursuit of providing a good education for rural children. Those conflicts are implicit in the story of the evolution and transformation of the educational system. I will make some of them explicit. Others I will only suggest or imply. It is likewise attractive to reduce the

individuals involved into either proponents or opponents of consolidation. Due to our dichotomous system of voting and my reliance on votes on public referenda and legislation, this dichotomy is literally true. The one-best-system policies of the State also create a climate of either being for or against. There are neither the organizational mechanisms nor the necessary mind set for the type of dialogue and exploration of options that would indicate the ambiguity involved in the positions held and which hold open the possibility of compromise. Due to the aforementioned considerations, and for ease in reporting, I shall generally refer to various individuals or groups in categorical terms as being either proponents or opponents. Where the data allow finer distinctions and reveal a more ambiguous attitude I shall report it.

Given the easy and forced polarization of the positions staked out and the published words of principal actors in the tale it is tempting to look for villains and heros. Proponents of school consolidation were and are the agents of change. In argument they take the offense, leaving those who resist defensive, and defined in the negative. Those leading the charge for change also generally were and are well-educated professionals with positions of authority in State and local government, in academia, and the business world. They have relatively easy access to sources of information and avenues of dissemination. They were and are also, by and large, successful in their endeavors. The story of the emergence of New York's

well-articulated, centralized education system could be told as hagiography, sanctifying these well-educated visionaries dragging the reluctant and provincial into a golden future.

Resistors to consolidation are often considered by proponents to be either penurious or ignorant. The ignorant may be converted through information. The penurious must merely be beaten down. I think, however, a richer story exists. Those that resist today articulate a legacy that goes back more than two hundred years. This legacy revolves around concerns about democratic participation, local control, and the nature and function of education. These resistors, people such as the women and men of the Rural School Improvement Society, could be presented as martyrs to a cause.[8]

Hopefully I have succeeded in not making saints or martyrs of either group, or of any individuals. Nor do I intend to create devils. I advocate no conspiracy theory. I neither look for nor find villains. Those espousing consolidation, however, have had the upper hand both in terms of getting their story out and in terms of achieving achieving their objectives. Those who resist have been fighting a fragmented, rear guard action, often focussed only on a particular law, or policy, or local activity. They do not fill the ranks of the State Education Department and lack the authority of that official voice.

One of the more important goals of my work is to give voice to those whose resistance has, for the main part, failed. It is not that I necessarily advocate their position(s). Rather, I take their claims seriously, and wish to accord them respect.

Resistance to consolidation is still strong.' The themes of seventy years ago reverberate in today's debates. However, the debate still suggests two groups talking past each other. Moreover, those who resist consolidation still seem relegated to an incomprehensible fringe position categorized by generic and pejorative terms such as "hill folk," "locals," and "anti-consolidators." In any given consolidation attempt opposition is often identified with a particular area of the district, usually one of the poorer, more sparsely settled regions. The name of that region, which often has a history of being denigrated locally, becomes symbol and appellation of those who resist. If I provide democratic legitimation to the voice of these resistors and help bring their arguments into the mainstream of discussion about school and district consolidation, I have succeeded. If I can contribute clarity to this debate while explicating the richness of its tensions, I will have succeeded.

There is a further historiographic aspect of the argument. The contemporary shape of New York's school system reflects old trends. We might call this the continuity thesis. The continuity thesis, my thesis, claims the educational system, as a Kindergarten through twelfth grade State education system, looks the way it does due to trends established in the early 1800s, and successfully developed to this day, and not as a result of a revolutionary, or even a reformist evolutionary, change that occurred at some specific point along the way.

My theory is neither causal nor deterministic. The full

story of the shape and evolution of the system is replete with accident, coincidence of events, the efforts of individuals, the influence of ideas, social and economic changes, and other explanatory historical contingencies. My task is not to explicate all these pieces of the puzzle, but rather to show that certain tensions, centered around the locus of control, have been evident in the education system since the State first exhibited interest in 1795. That the system appears the way it does today is largely a result of a critical mass of people and events supporting one of these thrusts, that of centralized control and system consolidation, for a variety of reasons and at the expense of alternatives. This is not a profound thesis, but it stresses an aspect of the evolution of an educational system that is beyond the scope of more detailed histories investigating more limited phenomena which generally fit into some neat category of cause or epoch. My tracing of these themes through time in the context of a single state also provides a sense of continuity and detail that generally gets lost in broader histories that attempt to account for national changes in schooling over time in relation to broad historical markers such as wars, economic changes, political shifts, the industrial revolution, and the like.

The Data

In telling the story of the development of a State education system and its relationship to rural school

consolidation and democratic control I am faced with choosing between approaches, each of which has its advantages and disadvantages. The choices I have made do not mean that other approaches are not useful or important but merely that this approach seems the most useful for telling this particular aspect of the story. One approach I have not taken, and which I urge another to take up, is a detailed social history surrounding the developments of which I write. That history would include an account of the transformation of the family relative to its educational role. It would require a detailed examination of religious transformations, the changing role of women and men in the home and work place, the industrial revolution and the growth of corporate capitalism, and the emergence of urban-oriented professionals as dominant social and political influences. We also need a solid account of social, political, and economic change in the agricultural areas of the Northeast. These projects, however, are beyond the scope of this history.[10]

My project involves a two-pronged approach: (1) the institutional history of the State's role in primary and secondary education, and (2) the local history of the provision of schooling. For the institutional history I have chosen to rely on four types of data: pertinent laws, annual education reports, select commission reports, and public writings by selected participants. For the local history I have chosen two types of data: a case study of two rural school districts, and articles and letters from a prominent New York farm journal.

New York State's official involvement with public education began in 1795, so the institutional history begins then. Provision of schooling in the case-study districts began in the mid-1600s. A brief account of the early years is given, but the story focusses on local schooling against the backdrop of State involvement. The farm journal, Moore's Rural New Yorker, began publishing in 1850, became The Rural New Yorker in 1878, and merged with The American Agriculturist in 1964. In its 114 years of continuous publication The Rural New Yorker carried thousands of articles, editorials, and letters devoted to rural schooling. It also served as the media conduit for organized opposition to State education policy during the twentieth.

My approach can be summarized as a weaving of the following strands of information.

1) First, trace seven variables through time-series data from 1795-1990. These variables are: school age population, enrollment, average daily attendance, number of school districts, number of schools, local funding, and State funding.

2) Second, examine select State legislation and activities of the State Education Department affecting rural districts. These activities intersect the time-series data and allow us to gauge the relationship between State activity and local institutions.

3) Third, connect both the time-series data and the

legislation to a case study of two local districts. The local study helps us reflect on the time-series data and the legislation from the vantage of what people in the districts actually did. There is a rich history of the local provision of education.

4) Fourth, use The Rural New Yorker as a proxy for local discussions of school issues.

The Conclusion

The trend toward a school system which is organizationally consolidated and centrally controlled started with the first State involvement in education in 1795. Opposition to that consolidation and centralization started at the same time. Consolidation and centralization have been the backbone of the plans of progressive reformers who focussed on the great good that could be done with increased power in the right hands; which hands, in turn, could effectively direct a coherent, tightly articulated, and responsive institution. Opposition has generally focussed on the educative benefits of locally controlled and located schools, on the moral and civic importance of keeping education community-based, and on democratic arguments for local control.

Democratic arguments for local control fall into two categories. The most frequently articulated is predicated on the assumed right of citizens to govern the schooling of their

children and to determine the future of existing public institutions. The more obscure argument, and which holds more interest to those concerned with the possibility of achieving a functioning popular democracy, has to do with the civic-educational function of local control. This latter argument found its most profound articulation in Thomas Jefferson's vision of democratic citizenship as an ongoing apprenticeship. Under this model, democratic citizens can only become competent, and thus worthy of being entrusted with the future of the polity, through practice in being both subject and ruler.

From 1795 until the mid-nineteenth century both the proponents and opponents of centralization tended to share a conviction in the primary importance of promoting the success of a democratic-republican experiment. There was general agreement on the need to preserve, nurture, and support local, democratic control of schooling. The essential end, or telos, of the school was in the development of competent democratic citizens, both in terms of educating pupils and of providing a civic apprenticeship for those citizens that governed the institutions.

After mid-century that republican experiment came increasingly under attack as having failed in important particulars. Those favoring increased centralization and consolidation began turning away from the rhetoric and practice of democracy and toward a concern with administrative, financial, and structural means. Concern with schooling as a system, rather than with schools as localized sites for the

education of children, began to dominate policy talk. The years from 1853 to 1904 were the period in which the republican experiment was reassessed.

From about 1904 through the present the attitude of reassessment turned into an assumption of failure. The republican experiment had failed and the pressing problem for those in the State Education Department was how to wrest control of the system, in its most fundamental aspects, away from citizen control and transfer it to professional control directed and coordinated from Albany. That struggle is still being waged. The reformers focus their arguments on issues of equity, efficiency, and quality. They ground their centralizing actions in the legal solidity of the State constitution, legislative acts, and judicial precedent. They wield powerful weapons in the form of financial incentives or penalties and regulatory mandates. Resistors focus their arguments on democratic myths and a tradition of local control. They ground their actions in slim legal support for local control. They wield the weapons of popular sympathy for questions of fairness and the rhetoric of democratic legitimacy. The felt need to honor at least the appearance of democratic legitimacy, and political prudence, have created a tension within reformers, both individually and collectively, which has thus far precluded overt or sustained attacks on the concept of local control. Rather, the concept has generally been honored, if diminished, rhetorically even as the legal and organizational structures needed to sustain it have been removed.

The easily enumerated accomplishments of this process of consolidation and centralization include the provision of a roughly equitably financed system of schools providing a fairly comprehensive educational program and co-curricular activities for virtually all students from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Children with special needs or talents generally have access to programs designed to meet those needs or advance those talents. The gifted and the challenged are provided for. School buildings tend to be large, well-built structures designed to offer modern conveniences and to meet numerous State health and safety standards. Teachers are all certified by the State and have received credentials as the result of successfully completing an extended course of study. School and district personnel are supervised by professional administrators, who also manage school and district affairs. The education of children is largely under the direction of credentialed experts, the activities of which, in turn, are to a large extent controlled by policies, regulations, laws, and monitoring agencies which derive their authority from the State government. In short, a State school system was created.

However, important things were also lost or diminished. An important, perhaps crucial, institution for developing competent and active democratic citizens has been reduced to the point of effective dissolution. Most citizens no longer have the training in the art of self-government which comes from running their own schools and participating in an open forum where ideas about how to educate children and how to provide that education

are discussed and voted upon. The sense of schooling as something that occurs within a community is all but lost.

There is irony in the slogan used by the most recent Statewide reform initiative, A New Compact for Learning, and attributed to an African proverb: "It takes the whole village to raise a child."[11] After ninety years of concerted effort the State Education Department has almost fully succeeded in taking control of education away from any effective community, or "village." State policy has ensured that children are aggregated and placed under the direction of experts primarily responsive to professional and State dictates. While continuing this policy of professionalization, centralization, and consolidation, the State now uses the governing metaphor of that which it has replaced to urge local officials to do a better job. In a sense, now that the "village" has been sanitized of its particularity and control is securely in the hands of the State, the State recognizes the educational necessity of community-directed learning and attempts to recreate, via A New Compact, what has been lost through the creation of a State system.

The evolution of New York's educational system provides a history of increasing organizational coherence, academic standardization, a type of program comprehensiveness, and perhaps a degree of academic excellence. It also chronicles the loss of an institution of civic education and the dissolution of communities which may be educationally necessary.

NOTES

1. 1990 United States census data as relayed over the phone by the U.S. Census Office of Statistical Information.

2. Jonathan P. Sher, ed., Education in Rural America: A Reassessment of Conventional Wisdom, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977, p.3.

3. Educational Networks Division, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education, "Rural Education: A Changing Landscape," May, 1989. Exact figures on any data circumscribed by the adjective "rural" are difficult to come by due to the difficulty of defining rural and the general lack of consensus on any particular classification. However, I use conservative figures provided by the United States Bureau of the Census and/or OERI. For a good discussion of defining and measuring ruralness I recommend the entire issue of Journal of Research in Rural Education, Vol. 8, No. 3, Fall 1992 (published by the College of Education, University of Maine at Orono).

4. Emil J. Haller, "High School Size, Location and Indiscipline: Another Aspect of the School Consolidation Issue?," unpublished manuscript, March 1991.

5. The University of the State of New York, "A Guide to the Reorganization of School Districts in New York State," Albany: New York, 1989.

6. The Kettering Foundation, Citizens and Politics: A View From Main Street America, prepared by The Harwood Group, The Kettering Foundation, 1991; Kettering Review, Fall 1991.

7. See Haller, "High School Size, Location and Indiscipline;" David H. Monk and Emil J. Haller, Organizational Alternatives for Small Rural Schools, Ithaca, New York: New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University, 1986; Emil J. Haller and David H. Monk, et al, "School Size and Program Comprehensiveness: Evidence from High School and Beyond," Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, Summer 1990, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 109-120; Roger G. Barker and Paul V. Gump, Big School, Small School: High School Size and Student Behavior. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1964. Also see Joseph Allen Locke Jr., The Financial Implications of Consolidation of Small School Districts in New York State, Dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University, March 1969.

8. I thank John Briggs for his ideas on how proponents of consolidation characterize their opponents.

9. In the fall of 1992 a committee appointed by the New York State Regents to study school district consolidation recommended strengthening the State Education Commissioner's authority to force

school districts to consolidate. In January 1993 State Education Commissioner Thomas Sobol cited political resistance as reason for not pursuing such a proposal.

10. Those interested in these suggested approaches might consult the following texts. Nancy Elizabeth Beadie, Defining the Public: Congregation, Commerce, and Social Economy In the Transformation of the Educational System, 1790-1840, dissertation, Syracuse University, August, 1989. Whitney R. Cross, The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1950. Mary P. Ryan, Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1981. Anthony F. C. Wallace, Rockdale, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978. Robert Wiebe, The Search for Order, 1877-1920, NY: Hill & Wang (a division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux), 1967. Christopher Lasch, Haven in a Heartless World, NY: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1977. Paul K. Conkin, Tomorrow a New World: The New Deal Community Program, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1959. Charles Wright Mills, White Collar, NY: Oxford University Press, 1951. David Riesman, The Lonely Crowd, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950.

11. University of the State of New York, "A New Compact for Learning," Albany, NY: State Education Department, p. 3.